DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 057 109 TM 000 954

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TITLE	An Evaluation of the Ginn "Reading 360" Programme in a Grade 3 Class of an Elementary School in Vancouver.
INSTITUTION	Vancouver Board of School Trustees (British Columbia).
REPORT NO	RR-71-14
PUB DATE	Jun 71
NOTE	14p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	Comparative Analysis; Creativity; Elementary Schools; *Grade 3; Norms; Post Testing; Pretesting; *Program Evaluation; Reading Development; *Reading Programs; *Reading Skills; *Reading Tests; Teacher Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS	Copp Clark Canadian Reading Development Series; *Ginn Reading 360 Programme; Metropolitan Achievement Tests; San Diego County Inventory of Reading Attitude

ABSTRACT

Evaluates the Ginn Reading 360 Programme, which is based on the premise that real reading is comprised of four essential parts: decoding, understanding the written message, critically evaluating that message, and incorporating the writer's ideas into one's own thinking and actions. A comparative study of the reading skills of a group of third graders participating in the Ginn program, and a group using the regular program showed no significant differences between the groups on any of the subtests in either pretesting or posttesting. Teacher opinion of the Ginn program, however, was positive. (CK)

ED057109

RESEARCH REPORT

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Research Report 71-14

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INTRODUCTION - THE PROGRAMME AND ITS GOALS

The Ginn "Reading 360" programme is published by Ginn and Company of Boston. The primary series is comprised of ten levels extending upwards through Grade 3.

The class in the study, a Grade 3 class at Dr. Annie B. Jamieson Elementary School in Vancouver, used levels eight and nine of the programme.

Texts for levels eight and nine have six units each, composed of poems, stories, and factual articles written by many different authors. The last unit in each book contains a full-length story. The authors consider the content of both texts to be vital, of a high interest level to children, and to contribute markedly to the further development of desirable skills.

Separate teachers' editions are available for each level of the programme. These provide specific aids to the teacher but leave room for individual variations.

Ginn Reading 360 is based on the premise that real reading is comprised of four essential parts: decoding, understanding the written message, evaluating critically that message, and incorporating the ideas of the writer into one's own thinking and actions.

The publishers think that one of the best and unique features of their programme is that it is based on recent research findings in the fields of reading instruction, linguistics, creativity, psychology, and literary analysis.

Throughout the programme there is considerable emphasis on the kindling of creativity in children. This is accomplished both by the nature of the selections and by the suggested activities accompanying them.

A core feature of Ginn Reading 360 is the presentation of material reflecting the broad variety of life in America. From this it is hoped that the children will develop some understanding and appreciation of the contributions made by many kinds of people, and that they will advance in their development of sound value systems. One disadvantage of this aspect is that the programme does focus on American life which makes it somewhat less suitable for Canadian children.

The development of skills is considered to be of critical importance in this, as in many, reading programmes. The authors of Reading 360 perceive nine distinct skills, the development of which they see as extending through all levels of the programme. These skills are: decoding, vocabulary, comprehension, creativity development, literary understanding and appreciation, language (growth), study skills, sensitivity to social-moral values, and acquisition of knowledge and information.

The role of the teacher is considered crucial to the success of the programme. While much is provided in the way of materials and suggestions, they are thought to be of secondary value to the guidance and direction of an alert, sensitive teacher.

PARTICIPANTS

The experimental group (on Reading 360) was composed of 24 pupils in a Grade 3 class at Dr. Annie B. Jamieson School. There were a few other children in the class who were not included in the study as they were working at the Grade 2 level at the beginning of the year and were not on the Ginn programme.

The control group (on the regular reading programme) consisted of 25 pupils in the other Grade 3 class at the same school. Similarly, there were a few children in this class who were omitted from the study as they were registered at the Grade 2 level.

EVALUATION

A. Results of Metropolitan Achievement Tests

A central part of the evaluation was an assessment of reading skills.

As the Metropolitan Achievement Test, Primary II Battery, Form B, had been given to all Grade 3 pupils in Vancouver during November 1970, it was decided that this would serve as a pre-test for the two classes in the study. Three subtests were given: Word Knowledge, Word Discrimination, and Reading (Comprehension). There were found to be no significant differences between the groups on any of the three subtests.

In May 1971, the Metropolitan Achievement Test, Elementary Battery, Form A, was given to both classes as a post-test. The subtests in this administration were: Word Knowledge, Word Discrimination, Reading, and Language (Usage, Punctuation and Capitalization). Again there were no significant differences between the groups on any of the subtests.

Unfortunately, the Primary II Battery, given as a pre-test, has no norms for Grade 3 students other than grade equivalents. Hence, the groups could be compared only by grade equivalent changes from pre-testing to post-testing. Mean grade equivalents for both groups, pre- and post-testing, and changes in

grade equivalent are shown in Table I. Since the pre-testing was done at a grade placement of 3.2 and the post-testing at a grade placement of 3.8, an improvement of +.6 would be the normally expected change. This (+.6) was the minimum change noted in either group on those subtests in which there was both pre- and post-testing.

Since the groups were the same, statistically, on pre- and post-testing, it must be concluded that the experimental group made no greater gains, as measured by the Metropolitan Achievement Tests, than did the control group. That is, the use of the Ginn Reading 360 programme, as compared to the regular Grade 3 reading programme, seems to have made no difference in achievement as measured by this test for these two Grade 3 classes. In fact, according to the norms for these batteries, both groups were achieving considerably in advance of their actual grade placement in all areas tested.

It can be speculated that other variables were involved, or that gains may have been made which the testing did not tap.

TABLE I: MEAN GRADE EQUIVALENTS AND CHANGES FROM PRE- TO POST-TESTING OF PUPILS IN TWO GRADE 3 CLASSES ON THE METROPOLITAN ACHIEVEMENT TESTS.

	PRE-TEST		POST-TEST		CHANGES	
	Primary II Battery Form B		Elementary Battery Form A			
Subtest	Experimental Group (N=24)	Control Group (N=25)	Experimental Group (N=24)	Control Group (N=25)	Experimental Group (N=24)	Control Group (N=25)
Word Knowledge	4.3	4.3	5.1	5.4	+ .8	+ 1.1
Word Discrimination	4.3	4.5	5.2	5.1	+ .9	+ .6
Reading	4.2	4.1	4.8	5.0	+ .6	+ .9
Language			6.0	5.9		

B. Results of the San Diego County Inventory of Reading Attitude

The San Diego County Inventory of Reading Attitude was administered in May 1971 to the experimental and control groups.

This inventory, developed in San Diego in 1961, measures reading attitude by means of twenty-five "yes-no" questions. The higher the score the more positive is the attitude toward reading as measured by this test. The stanine scale provided is based on a San Diego population and it may not be entirely appropriate for use in Vancouver. However, it is considered to be more suitable than using the Vancouver norms which are based on a smaller number of children from Grade 5 only.

Table II shows the distribution by stanine categories for raw scores of both groups of students in the study.

TABLE II: SAN DIEGO COUNTY INVENTORY OF READING ATTITUDE — DISTRIBUTION OF SCORES BY STANINE CATEGORIES (SAN DIEGO 1961 NORMS) FOR TWO GRADE 3 CLASSES, MAY, 1971. (CUMULATIVE PERCENTAGES ARE IN BRACKETS)

Stanine	Raw Scores	Percent at Each Stanine		
		Norm Group	Experimental Group	Control Group
			(N=24)	(N=25)
9	25	4 (100)	4 (100)	4 (100)
8	23 - 24	7 (96)	4 (96)	20 (96)
7	21 - 22	12 (89)	17 (92)	12 (76)
6	19 - 20	17 (77)	8 (75)	20 (64)
5	16 - 18	20 (60)	17 (67)	20 (44)
4	13 - 15	17 (40)	25 (50)	20 (24)
3	10 - 12	12 (23)	17 (25)	4 (4)
2	7 - 9	7 (11)	4 (8)	0 (0)
1	0 - 6	4 (4)	4 (4)	0 (0)

It can be seen from the above table that the distribution for the experimental group (on Reading 360) is relatively close to the norms. The distribution for the control group, however, is not a normal one. It has considerably more scores in the higher stanines than either the norm group or the experimental group.

Table III shows the percent of scores below average (stanines 1 - 3), average (stanines 4 - 6), and above average (stanines 7 - 9) for each group. The differences between the groups are made more apparent by this table.

TABLE III: PERCENT OF SCORES BELOW AVERAGE, AVERAGE, AND ABOVE AVERAGE ON THE SAN DIEGO COUNTY INVENTORY OF READING ATTITUDE FOR TWO GROUPS OF GRADE 3 PUPILS, MAY, 1971.

Level of Scores	Norm Group	Experimental Group (N=24)	Control Group (N=25)
Above average (stanines 7 - 9)	23	25	36
Average (stanines 4 - 6)	54	50	60
Below average (stanines 1 - 3)	23	25	4

These findings are further borne out by the mean scores for the two groups. The mean score for the experimental group was 15.75, while that for the control group was 18.96. The difference between the mean scores of the groups is significant at the .05 level.

Based on these results it must be concluded that attitude towards reading, as assessed by the San Diego County Inventory of Reading Attitude, was higher in the control group than in the experimental group (that of the latter being average). As no pre-testing was done, it is not possible to attribute this difference to the treatment. One can only speculate as to reasons. Perhaps the groups differed at the outset in their attitudes to reading.

C. Assessment by an Independent Observer

Mrs. Cynthia Taylor, Coordinator of Kindergarten and Primary Grades for the Vancouver School Board, submitted the following assessment of the programme.

"Experimental Group: One class, year three; using Ginn Reading 360

Control Group: One class, year three; using Copp Clark Canadian Reading Development Series

Informal Evaluation: Listening to oral reading of children in both classes; chatting with children; discussion with both teachers

Comments on Ginn Reading 360: Good for slower children, but can be easily enriched. Style of writing less literary than Copp Clark—more direct. Each story requires some teaching, but new words are not difficult. Up-to-date, contemporary vocabulary. Copp Clark useful supplementary to Ginn 360. Phonics programme slower than in Copp Clark series—much of material is review of year two work until later in year. Dictionary skills developed later in programme than in Copp Clark series. High interest level. Much social studies learning, though not tied directly to the year three social studies curriculum. Teacher's Guidebook well organized and helpful; every type of study skill developed; follow-up activities good.

Comment on Oral Reading: Children in the control class read in slightly more fluent style than those in experimental class. Production of oral and written work in both classes good."

D. Assessment by the Teacher of Reading 360

The teacher of the grade 3 class in the study using Ginn Reading 360 offered the following critique of her experiences with the programme.

"I should like to ... express my personal reactions to the Reading 360 program, my class and I were using in our reading program this year. We had the opportunity of using the book for level 8 and the book for level 9 of the series.

First of all, I should like to say that I believe all reading instruction problems would not be solved by using this program. However, I believe my reading program this year was very successful.

A few aspects of the program stand out in my mind. The organizing principles of Reading 360 impressed me greatly. Someone using the series for the first time could not help but feel secure and well-informed as to what direction her reading program was headed. It is unnecessary to elaborate in any detail as the books and their introductions speak for themselves.

Although pupil interest is hard to evaluate, I felt that Reading 360 made the children's daily reading periods successful and enjoyable. The contents of the readers, exercises, creative and otherwise, made reading a challenge.

Another feature of Reading 360 which impressed me was the suitability of the material which seemed to meet the needs of most children. The majority of the pupils were not frustrated with the contents, yet the brighter students found the contents appealing as well. So often basal readers are unsuitable to the average and slower student.

In closing, I should like to say that it is difficult for me to assess the Reading 360 program in its entirety. My class and I were using only levels 8 and 9, whereas there are 10 levels to the primary program.

I have appreciated the opportunity of trying out these books with my class."

SUMMARY

The Ginn Reading 360 programme was used during the 1970-71 school year by a Grade 3 class at Dr. Annie B. Jamieson School. The other Grade 3 class at this school formed the control group for the evaluation.

Metropolitan Achievement Tests were administered in November 1970 and in May 1971. There were no significant differences between the groups on any of the subtests in either pre- or post-testing. The experimental group, then, made no greater gains than the control group. The mean scores for both groups are well in advance of the actual grade placement.

On the San Diego County Inventory of Reading Attitude the control group scored significantly higher than the experimental group. One can only speculate that perhaps the groups differed at the outset in this regard or that there were unknown variables.

The independent observer thought both classes were doing well but that children in the control class read in a slightly more fluent style than those in the experimental class.

The teacher of Reading 360 felt that this programme would not solve all reading instruction problems but thought it was successful with her group. The teacher-oriented aspects, she thought, were good. Daily reading periods were successful and enjoyable. She considered that the nature of the material was most suitable and provided a challenge.

Although test results are inconclusive, the teacher thinks that the programme has merit.